

TREASURY DEPARTMENT
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Mrs. Nellie Tayloe Ross, Director of the Mint, announced today that members of an annual Assay Commission, appointed by the President, will meet at the Philadelphia Mint, Wednesday, February 14, to conduct the tests provided by law to determine whether the nation's silver coinage measures up to standards of fineness and weight.

The assembling of a commission, to supervise the assaying by experts of random-selected coins, is a safeguard of the nation's monetary system that has been exercised without interruption for 152 years, starting the year following the creation of the Mint.

This year the "pyx", or sample box, contains 261,064 silver coins, one out of each 2,000 produced by three coinage Mints, from the record 1944 production of 522,119,800 pieces. Manufacture of minor coins, which are excluded from the testing requirement, swelled the year's total production of domestic coins to more than 2,844,000,000 pieces.

From the pyx a representative number of coins will be taken for testing by the Commission.

Members of the Commission, who are paid expenses, but no salary, for their work, might well sense an invisible spectator in the austere shade of Alexander Hamilton, first Secretary of the Treasury, looking, perhaps with some amazement, at the prodigious pile of coins. For it was Hamilton who, back in 1791, in presenting to the Congress the result of his "inquiries and reflections" relative to the establishment of a Mint, suggested the system of sampling and testing. His suggestion was adopted, and the tradition has been observed since.

Wrote Hamilton:

"The remedy for errors in the weight and alloy of the coins must necessarily form a part in the system of the Mint; and the manner of applying it will require to be regulated."

The First Secretary then described the English system of preserving promiscuously chosen samples of coinage in "a strong box, called the pix", for mass assaying by a jury of the Company of Goldsmiths.

Concluded Hamilton:

"The expediency of some similar regulation seems to be manifest."

Presidentially appointed members of this year's commission are as follows:

Andrew Augustine, president of the Augustine Construction Company, 4401 Disston Street, Philadelphia; Mrs. Mabel E. Murphy, 8 East Union Street, Bordentown, N. J.; Mrs. Mary Riley, 131 Crystal Avenue, New London, Conn.; L. B. Macurdy, Division of Weights and Measures, National Bureau of Standards, Washington; J. J. Seefer, retired hotel executive and real estate dealer, 20 Blackstone Boulevard, Providence, R. I.; Mrs. David Levy, 300 Park Avenue, New York; Jordan L. Alperin, vice-president of the Eastern Smelting and Refining Corp. 109 West Brookline Street, Boston; Max M. Schwartz, attorney, 152 West 42nd Street, New York; Robert Wilson, merchant, Lima, Ohio; H. Gleenwood Evans, former member of the Maryland House of Delegates and head of a seafood distributing company, Crisfield, Md.; Samuel F. Hoffberger, attorney, 215 North Calvert Street, Baltimore.

The ex-officio members designated by statute are:

Judge William H. Kirkpatrick, of the Federal District Court, Eastern District of Pennsylvania; Preston Delano, Comptroller of the Currency, Washington; and Joseph S. Buford, Assayer of the United States Assay Office, New York.

Mr. Macurdy will take to Philadelphia the official weights and measures to be used in the tests.